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# INDUSTRIAL AND SYSTEMS ENGINEERING



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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ALUMNA NANCY SPELSBERG  
KNOWS HOW TO DELIVER





# ALUMNA HAS DRIVE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Nancy Spelsberg will gladly nudge students toward industrial engineering.

And it's not just because she's a 1999 graduate and a member of the ISyE department advisory board.

"You can go into business, you can go into engineering directly or you could do just about anything," she says.

Spelsberg is living proof of those words. Never in her wildest dreams would she have imagined herself running a trucking company, but here she sits, president and part owner of BCP Transportation.

"Not until the opportunity ended up presenting itself was that even in the realm of possibility," she says.

Spelsberg had worked her way up at Alliant Energy during a decade-long tenure there after graduation, but she had dreamed of owning a small business, preferably in manufacturing, since high school—an ambition she traces to childhood visits to her uncle's road construction operation and limestone mine in West Virginia.

**Spelsberg says BCP has established a family-oriented, fun culture while still relentlessly striving to create operational efficiencies and opportunities for improvement.**

Her experience in the Evening MBA Program in the Wisconsin School of Business only strengthened her resolve. The trick? Finding the right opportunity. Spelsberg sent letters to around 75 small manufacturers across south central Wisconsin to inquire about buying them out. She heard back from a handful and, while most were non-starters, a call from Badger Custom Pallet led to a visit.

"At that point they had already grown beyond what I was capable of doing on my own," Spelsberg recalls.

But the two sides remained in touch and when the pallet manufacturer decided to revisit operating its own trucking company in 2011, BCP asked Spelsberg to join the ownership group and run the Deerfield, Wisconsin-based operation.

"It wasn't exactly manufacturing, but it was an opportunity to start something from scratch," she says. "I kind of thought, 'If I don't do it now, I'll always look back and wish I would have done something or tried it.'"

BCP has grown from four trucks and fewer than 10 employees to around 100 trucks and a team of 135, while also adding warehousing and an equipment maintenance and service shop along the way. The company hauls freight all over the lower 48 states for a wide range of customers, even delivering the UW football team's equipment for road games.

"There's definitely never a dull moment," says Spelsberg.

She has also introduced a number of sustainable strategies to reduce fuel costs and carbon emissions: All of BCP's trailers are outfitted with side skirts and trailer tails to

reduce aerodynamic drag, and the company has installed auxiliary power units in its trucks to provide electricity, heating and cooling without idling overnight.

Spelsberg says BCP has established a family-oriented, fun culture while still relentlessly striving to create operational efficiencies and opportunities for improvement. Every quarter, the company runs its financial and operational numbers, examining metrics such as out-of-route miles to hunt for potential cost savings.

She's even involved ISyE students in some of those efforts in recent semesters as part of the department's senior design projects. Teams of students have studied the company's warehousing operations and looked at how to optimize on-the-road fueling strategies.

"These are really bottom-line-impacting projects that we define and we have the students run with," says Spelsberg, who has also used BCP resources to support the college's Badgerloop team.

Those student projects hone the kind of continuous improvement mentality Spelsberg says she gained from her industrial engineering education.

"There's always something that could be done better or more efficiently," she says.



Photo: Renee Meiller